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## *House of Representatives*

# MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008

**HON. BOB FILNER**

OF CALIFORNIA  
IN THE HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. *Filner*). Mr. *Filner* is not only the Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee in the House, he has been a tremendous champion this year in fighting to see that we received \$11.9 billion increase in funding for veterans since January.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Chairman, I thank the committee for doing so much for veterans in this bill. And I want to add my thanks to Congressman *Young* from Florida. He and his wife, Beverly, have been an incredible inspiration. So we want to say on the record from our side of the aisle how much we appreciate you and your wife's efforts on behalf of our veterans. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, what this bill does and what our previous bills that we have passed here, the continuing resolution that we've had for

this year, the supplemental for the war, added more than 30 percent to the health care budget from last year for the health care of our veterans. That's an unprecedented increase, and it comes at a time when we have unprecedented needs. So your work, Mr. Chairman, has been incredible for all of the veterans and their families in this Nation.

No matter where we stand on the war, and there's a lot of divisiveness in this House about the war, we are united in saying, through this bill, that when every young man and woman comes back from Iraq or Afghanistan, they are going to get all the love, the care, the attention, the dignity, the honor that a Nation can bestow; and we are committed to that.

And we are committed, not only to those veterans who are just coming back, but to those who are with us from World War II,

from Korea, from Vietnam, from the first Persian Gulf war. We're going to take care of them all.

We do not think that the problem with the Veterans' Administration is that there are too many veterans. We think we have to get the resources into the VA, and then have the accountability that it's spent wisely.

We have an administration that says, support the troops, support the troops, support the troops; but when they come home, as we have seen in Walter Reed and other places, too many times they're on their own. They slip through the cracks.

Virtually everyone who comes back from this war has evidence of either brain injury or PTSD, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and we simply don't have the resources to treat them. There are waiting lists. There are people told to call back, go home.

We had a young Marine in Minnesota who went to his hospital because he thought he had PTSD because he was thinking of suicide. What happened? He was told he was 28th on the waiting list, to go home. And he went home and committed suicide. That is a crime and we are not going to commit those crimes on our returning heroes. We are going to look at not only the brain injuries, not only the PTSD, but to make sure the backlog of pension disability claims is taken down to zero, where it's now at 600,000.

We've got a lot of work to do. We've got a lot of work to handle all these heroes from World War II to the present, and with your budget, Mr. Chairman, we're going to be able to do this. We thank you. And we're going to work to get the accountability and the work done that lets these heroes know that their Nation is worthy of their sacrifice.